



PAIN AND WORK

We often think about work as a chore that has to be done. However, there are also many benefits of working too:

Benefits of work:

- Better general health
- Live longer
- Routine
- Regular activity
- Sense of identity
- Improved confidence
- Improved self-esteem
- Regular income

Possible disadvantages of work

- Stress
- Less time for exercise or other activities
- Don't like your job
- Financial dis-incentives - may be better off on benefits

When people are in pain the disadvantages of work can often seem to outweigh the benefits. If this is the case, it's important to try and plan and make changes to tackle some of the issues which are causing problems at work.

Staying in work

If you have continued to work, but are currently struggling, it can be helpful to identify which particular parts of work you are struggling with and try and plan how they could be adapted. Listed below are steps you can take to try and make your job easier to complete:

- Write down everything you do at work. Look through the list - is everything on there necessary? Could some of these tasks be allocated to colleagues?
- Discuss problems with your manager - it may be possible to adapt your role to allow you to continue to work.
- If you have a desk job, change position and stretch frequently. The body likes to move and joints and muscles will start to ache if kept in the same position for too long, especially if they are stiff and weak.
- If your job involves heavy lifting, think about whether you need assistance to manoeuvre heavy objects. If you are unsure, ask to speak to your health and safety representative. They can arrange an assessment or advise on equipment which may make your job easier.

Returning to work

If you are on sick leave from work, returning can seem daunting. There are some simple steps you can take to make returning to work easier:

- Rather than returning full time on light duties, discuss a graded return with your employer. It is easier to get used to returning to work if you can do this a little at a time, rather than returning full time immediately. This is also beneficial for your employer, as you will hopefully be able to resume all of your normal activities within a relatively short period.
- Gradually increase your hours over an agreed period.
- Review your progress regularly. If you are increasing your hours too quickly, you may have a set back. On the other hand, if things go too slowly, you will not increase your confidence and it will take longer to return.

Get Oldham Working provides local support for people looking to get into work or for careers opportunities. They provide the National Careers Service and Skills for Employment as well as a Career Advancement Service and can be contacted on 0161 770 4674.

Remploy (0300 456 8110) & Access to Work (0800 121 7479) offer help for staying in work.

Finding a new job

If you are not currently working because of your pain (or other health problem) specialist help is now available through job centre plus <https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus>. Make an appointment to see the disability employment advisor to find out more about the help available to people looking to get back into work.

Also, consider voluntary work as a way to help you get back into paid employment. It's a good way to get you back into the routine of working, build your confidence and demonstrate to employers that you are capable of returning to work. Remember, no job is harmful for you but you may need to build your fitness to get into more physically demanding jobs.

Voluntary Action Oldham

<http://www.vaoldham.org.uk/>

0161 633 6222